

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

121209Z Nov 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 002277

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/11/2008

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ARMED BANDS BURN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS IN ANAMBRA STATE

REF: LAGOS 2227

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne per 1.4 b and d

11. (C) Summary: In what appears to be a full throttle attempt to provoke a state of emergency in Anambra State, armed bands have been on a rampage in the state over the past two days. They have burned government buildings, including the Governor's residence and State Election Commission building, media outlets and commercial facilities. They also reportedly briefly held hostage some State Assembly members. Numerous state officials are now in hiding. The police have been conspicuously absent. Just back from the United States, Anambra State Governor Chris Ngige was in Abuja when the violence erupted on Wednesday, and he has not returned to Anambra. President Obasanjo is holding an emergency security meeting, today, November 12 to discuss the unfolding crisis. The armed bands are likely the handiwork of millionaire Chris Uba who has been trying to oust Ngige since the two men had a falling out shortly after Ngige's disputed election in 12003. End Summary.

Armed Youths Go On A Rampage

12. (U) According to press reports, roving bands burned and/or looted the following establishments over the two-day period, November 10-11:
-- Governor's residence
-- Deputy governor's office
-- State Assembly Complex
-- Women's Development Center (state-affiliated)
-- Ikenga hotel (government- owned)
-- Anambra State Broadcasting Service (two radio stations and one television facility)
-- Anambra State Independent Electoral Commission
-- Several commercial and private vehicles

13. (U) Press and other sources reported that the police did not respond to the attacks against government facilities. The commissioner of the State Police pleaded "helplessness" in a television broadcast and sought the assistance of neighboring state commands. Numerous Ngige supporters claim the police in some instances helped transport the marauders. Reports of the numbers of persons possibly killed during the violence vary widely. The police claim no/no deaths; while Ngige's others allege up to 27 fatalities. Most news reports put the death toll around 7-10.

Members of State Assembly Briefly Taken Hostage;
Speaker of the State Assembly Pleads for USG Intervention

14. (C) Mike Balonwu, Speaker of the Anambra State Assembly called Embassy Abuja November 10 reporting that "anarchy" was reigning in the state. Balonwu alleged that Chris Uba was orchestrating the violence in an effort to disrupt local elections scheduled for December 18 and provoke President Obasanjo into imposing emergency rule. In a November 11 follow-up call with Consulate Lagos, Balonwu further claimed that the "hoodlums" surrounded his legislative quarters and briefly held him and other State Assembly members hostage, at which point the police "evaporated." Balonwu said he only managed to escape with the assistance of the State Security Service (SSS). Balonwu reported that he and other state officials are now in hiding.

15. (C) Balonwu urged USG intervention to prevent Obasanjo from declaring a state of emergency and replacing Ngige as he did Plateau State Governor Dariye. It is time, Balonwu said, for Obasanjo to "act like a leader and stop letting his friends do whatever they want."

16. (C) Chief O. Ukwu, an Igbo traditional leader and member of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), told us that he met Chris Uba and Chief Chris Orijiokwe, a PDP official, in Anambra state several days ago. Ukwu recalled Uba cryptically saying that a plan was in motion to foil the planned December 18 local elections and to bring his feud

with Ngige to a head. Ukwu claimed that as this encounter was ending, Orijiokwe intimated that he would soon be "number one in the state." During this violent spate, Orijiokwe has been quick with public statements condemning Governor Ngige for losing control of the state and that the tumult was evidence of popular discontent with Ngige's governance.

Emergency Security Meeting in Abuja

17. (U) According to the press, President Obasanjo is convening an emergency meeting on the Anambra crisis, today, November 12. The meeting is to be attended by Obasanjo's chief security advisors and Anambra State Governor Ngige. Ngige was in Abuja (on reportedly unrelated matters) at the time of the outbreak of the violence on Wednesday. Ngige apparently has not sought to return to Anambra due to fears over his personal safety.

Comment

18. (C) This outcrop of violence is the latest episode in the long-running feud between Chris Uba and Chris Ngige. As reported reftel, Uba has been trying to oust Ngige since Ngige reneged on a 2003 pre-election arrangement that would have ceded a considerable windfall from the state's coffers to Uba. It is almost certain that Uba bankrolled this latest rampage. Uba's goal is to make Anambra ungovernable so that Ngige is relieved of the helm. His animus for Ngige has led the unrestrained Uba toward these extreme tactics. Uba must have felt certain that he holds most of the aces before taking such a gambit. The next few days and the meetings held by President Obasanjo in Abuja will show whether he assessed correctly if he succeeds in unseating Ngige. If Ngige survives this latest attack from Uba, he must still contend with Uba's forces in the upcoming December elections, where Uba will attempt to further entrench his supporters.

19. (C) Comment Cont'd: It is not clear what would happen if Ngige is ousted. One possible scenario is that Peter Obi would be eventually installed as governor. Obi was the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate who most Anambrians believe won the 2003 election (reftel). APGA has filed suit protesting the 2003 elections and Obi and Uba have been in closed door talks, but no deal has been sealed. Alternatively, Uba is probably interviewing several PDP officials in the state to determine which would be the most pliant and trustworthy to do his bidding if placed in the now damaged governor's mansion.

110. (C) Comment Cont'd. Thus far, Uba has been given a long leash in creating mischief in Anambra. However, Anambra is now an unalloyed national embarrassment that could hurt Obasanjo because of Uba's clear links to the President. Uba probably now has the upperhand over Ngige. But if the political backlash is too severe, Obasanjo might move to quiet Uba or even jettison him. End Comment.

BROWNE